8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

anschauung, in which all experience has a place in the logic of emotional associations. Thus one old fellow summed up a discussion of the sea creatures which still haunt the western coasts of Ireland: "Everything that does be on the land is in the sea, too, if we could see them". This world-view incorporates the world into the life the countryman follows and knows. To the same old fellow, winds along the Clare and Galway border that separates Munster and Connaught provinces could appear as the battles of fairy hosts, for do not men today still remember human battles and still taunt the men of the other province in joke and banter? The rustle of a breeze and the flitting of bats in a ruin where men lived and died is not mere noise; it is still part of human life. One old fellow described to me the experience of 'them' that he got at close quarters, when he lived near the ruin of Ballyvaughan workhouse:

"They were so plentiful there that everybody living round it and myself got so used to them that we wouldn't mind them at all. The place is full of them and everywhere you go there is a door and long windows in the cowl, and you hear them going in and out. There was a great lot of people died in it long ago in the bad times. They are in every room and you hear them on all sides of you. I got so used to it, I never minded them at all, but I heard them every day."

The great cliffs of Moher on the Clare coast are

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XVII

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS: THE COUNTRY TOWN.

Although the Celtic year began with All Hallows Day (November 1st), for our purpose we may regard it as starting on February 1st, or St. Bridget's Day. This was the first day of Spring, and of field work, for the Saint promised that every second day thereafter would be hard and dry. The circle of the year ran its course through the seasons, punctuated by certain fixed festivals and by the uncertain advent of births, marriages, illness and death. It is with the fixed festivals that we are concerned in this chapter. The four seasons have their opening days on the first of February, May, August and November, and the celebration of these days and the preceding Eves is a pagan survival breaking through the Christian calendar. The festivals of February and of November have been taken under the special protection of the Church through their association with St. Bridget and All Saints, but many traces of the "elder faiths" of nature worship live on, sanctified by tradition if not always by the Church.

On St. Bridget's Eve (January 31st) it is customary for country children to pull rushes—they must not be cut with a knife—and take them home to be made into crosses by the family gathered round the fire. A fixed ritual, varying from one district to another, determines the procedure, and it traditionally included the St. Bridget's supper of pancakes or sowens taken from a plate laid on top of a rush cross. The

221 796 805 [821] [996]
221 796 788 285
[p.153]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

171 524 American Indians is the buzz, a rectangular piece of wood or a circular disc of metal which is rotated on a twisted string, by drawing the hands apart, to produce a buzzing sound. It is recorded that the young weavers of 19th century Belfast were fond of playing with the "bummer," and I saw the toy, called a "snorer," in use in north-east Antrim this summer.

857 524 Many examples could be given of children's games and rhymes which retain memories of ancient rites. Thus it has been suggested that the game known as "Draw a pail of water" is "the attenuated survival of the religious rite of water worship." Similarly there are hints of foundation sacrifice in "the Devil's Bridge," of marriage by capture in "Nuts in May," of marriage by purchase in "Lords from Spain" and of funeral rites in "Jeannie Jo" and "Green Gravel." These games are not necessarily long established in Ireland—some of them were probably introduced by planters, as in the Appalachian region of the U.S.A.—but they are of wide occurrence and considerable age in other parts of Europe.

754 It is worth putting on record that the aid of magic is still sought in causing illness by making and injuring a wax model of someone to whom ill is wished. It is not five years since a case which resulted in death occurred within a short distance

789 821 of Belfast. I have no doubt that instances of curious love charms, of raising a wind and so on could still be found, though the old method of burying a black hen alive to bring a fair wind is probably forgotten. The so-called "protective formulæ" such as "God bless the work" and "I wish you luck of the baste" are common currency.

241 289 Harvest customs that deserve mention are the cutting of the last sheaf and the wearing of harvest knots. In the north of Ireland, as in many other parts of Europe, it was customary, so long as sickles were the reaping tools—the practice became modified with the use of scythes—for the harvesters to fling their hooks at the last plaited remnant of standing corn. This was known under various names such as neck, churn, hare, granny, carline and cailleach or "collya."

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

132 washed up on them; at least four of these are now in Inishbofin, and large quantities of drift of various kinds are thrown up on the shores from time to time.

137 The botany and zoology of the islands is outside of the scope of the present Paper, but a few words of general description may help to make the picture of the place more complete.

Here, as elsewhere, on our western coast, there is a tradition that the islands were at one time well wooded; and this is corroborated by the occasional discovery of tree-trunks in the bogs. At the present day, though under the influence of the warm, moist climate, other vegetation flourishes, trees of any sort cannot be got to grow, and all attempts to rear them have hitherto been failures, as the strong winds quickly destroyed them. Even in the most sheltered spots bushes will hardly grow, and there are not a dozen of five feet in height to be found in the islands.

136 Large numbers of sea-birds nest on the rocky islets round the coasts; pigeons in large numbers inhabit the caves of Inishshark, and, until within a few years ago, eagles used regularly to nest on a high pinnacle of rock, known as the Boughal, in the channel between the islands. Rabbits and rats are both very plentiful; but hares, bats, weasels, and frogs are not found on either island.

[821] Around the coast, porpoises, sea-otters, and seals (which latter are looked upon as forerunners of stormy weather when they appear) are often seen, and the "sun-fish" (*Selache maxima*, the great basking shark) appears usually about the end of March; it leaves nearly always before the end of June, and was until a few years ago regularly fished for.

III.—Anthropography.

125 1. *Methods.*—These do not require any very extended notice, being practically the same as those employed last year, and described in the report on the Aran investigation. A few changes were made, consisting mainly in the substitution of measurements and instruments shown by experience to be needed, for some which had proved unnecessary, and the use of the new observation form provisionally adopted by the Irish Sub-Committee for the Ethnographic Survey of the British Association. This form, though not perfect, proved to be of much value for field work as, owing to its arrangement, observations can be made with much greater rapidity than is possible by the old system; and the chance of omitting any important point is almost entirely avoided. The economy of time alone is a point of much im-

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

777 bless it," and any evil or illness happens afterwards, the chances are that the blame will be put on the "bad eye." The evil-eye may be [788] rendered harmless by making the sign of the cross in the name of the Trinity.

754 There is an old woman in Bofin who is considered to be a witch, and is said to be in the habit of putting the "bad eye" on people and on domestic animals.

825 821 There are several beliefs about beasts and birds, such as that the barnacles on the logs of drift wood, which often come ashore, develop into geese, and that a gale of wind may be brought on by the simple expedient of putting a black cat under a pot. Seals are thought to be enchanted men, and will dive if they see a priest or a man in a black coat; their appearance is said to portend bad weather. Who these 825 enchanted men were, and by whom they were placed under the enchantment, I could not ascertain, but the following mention of this belief is made in a footnote by the late Mr. Hardiman, in his edition of O'Flaherty's "H'Iar Connaught" (p. 27):—

"Many traditions, connecting these harmless animals with the marvellous, are related along our western shores. Among these there is one of a curious nature, viz. that at some distant period of time several of the Clan Coneelys (Mac Conġaile), an old family of Iar Connaught, were by "Art magick," metamorphosed into seals! In some places the story has its believers, who would no more kill a seal or eat of a slaughtered one than they would of a human Coneely. It [551] is related as a fact that this ridiculous story has caused several of the clan to change their name to Conolly."

776 Fairies are firmly believed in by many, and one man who is subject to epileptic fits relates long stories of his dealings with them.

Many tales are told about them and their doings, but few of them can be collected by a stranger, as the people are very reticent on the subject. They are supposed to exercise a malign influence on infants, especially before baptism, stealing them if good-looking, and supplying their places with puny, wizened changelings. These are got rid of, and the true child recovered by very simple means; it is only necessary to light a large fire and put on the pot to boil, and then to threaten the changeling that he will be boiled, when he will vanish, and the lost child be found in his place.

[775] Woman who die in childbirth or from puerperal fever are believed to be carried away by the fairies to act as wet-nurses.

776 854 Mrs. Allies informed me that her baby is regularly spat upon by the people when its nurse takes it out, in order to keep off the fairies

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

The effect of the evil eye is much dreaded, and illness and misfortune are ascribed to it; for this reason, a child or an animal should not be praised without saying "God bless it," to avert misfortune. To counteract this influence, human beings may be spit upon, or the sign of the cross made on them in the name of the Trinity. Cattle sometimes have knot-charms tied to their tails. 777 789

Many animals have beliefs or customs connected with them. A fox should not be interfered with by the people in his neighbourhood, or he will revenge himself by raids on their fowls; if well treated he will do no damage. 825

Seals are thought by some to be enchanted men or transmigrated souls, and for this reason are not molested. A man at Portacloy asserted that it was unlucky to kill seals, and added, as a warning, that he knew a man, a relative of his own, who went into a cave to slay a seal, and on raising his club to strike it, saw the animal change into a large frog. He did not, however, seem to have any very great faith in his own story, as a few minutes afterwards he offered to sell a sealskin.

It is believed also that on some nights seals assume human shape, and that a number of them gather together on the rocks and wail aloud.

C. O. states that the people of Tip were reputed by their neighbours to be "peculiar" because they ate seals' flesh. [262]

The soil of Inishglora is thought to be so fatal to rats that if one of these animals be brought to the island it will die as soon as it touches the soil, and a handful of sand from the island will perfectly protect a house against this kind of vermin. [823]

A black hen used, on some occasions (and may perhaps be still) to be buried alive with its wings spread out to bring about a fair wind or some desired good fortune. [821]

Ghosts and apparitions are fully believed in. Two instances of the spirits of drowned persons being seen walking about are reported to have occurred within the past year; one of these was said to have occurred near Blacksod, where the ghost of a sailor was seen on the sea-shore. An apparation in the form of a black dog is sometimes seen by belated travellers not far from Portacloy. About half-a-mile outside Belmullet and within the peninsula of the Mullet, there is a mound in a field by the roadside; this is raised over the bodies of some of the peasantry who were slain in a combat with the yeomanry (known as the battle of Meenane Creve), in the year 1793. At this spot the ghost of a young man without a head is seen sitting upon the 775

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

171
352
[354]

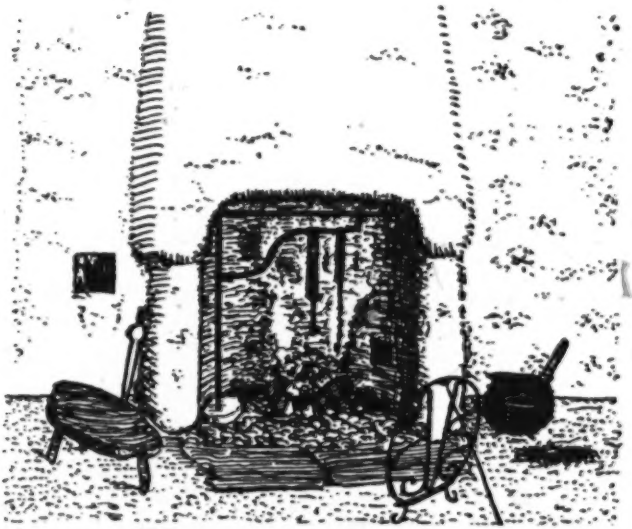

FIG. 19. A Donegal hearth, with crane, creepie and bread-iron. Pot and pot-hole on right.

other'.[1] It is interesting to notice that it is the Mongol usage to allot the right side of the yurt to men and the left side to women.[2] We are surely dealing with a very ancient tradition related perhaps to the ordered routine of a pastoral nomadic life. For the Mongols the right and left sides were symbolized respectively by horse and cow. In the humblest Irish farms, [514] which lack sanitary conveniences of any kind, it is customary for the women to use the byre and the men the stable.

354 If we now turn to the methods of suspending cooking pots over the fire we shall see how the woman's functions are best 821 carried out on the left side. Besides the convenience of this for a normal right-handed person, there lies behind it the notion that for good luck significant actions involving the food supply—such as ploughing, casting a net or taking a pot off the fire—should follow the direction of the sun's movement in the sky. Thus the crane on which the pots are hung is almost

[1] Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (1857), 96
[2] E. D. Chapple and C. S. Coon, *Anthropology* (1946), 539.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

invariably pivoted on the left side of the fire so that it swings out with the sun. The iron crane is more characteristic of stone fireplaces than of those with wattled braces, which tend to preserve older methods of hanging. Some of them, indeed, have a large crane or 'gallows' of bog-oak with a long arm pivoting on a massive heel six feet high: I have come across several in Co. Armagh (Fig. 20). One may guess that well-appointed houses of the central-hearth style had some such appliance in early times, turning, perhaps, as do similar hanging-devices in the Roumanian shepherds' wooden *stanas*, on an upright post pivoted in the tie beam of the rafters. Framed within the white-

354
[821]

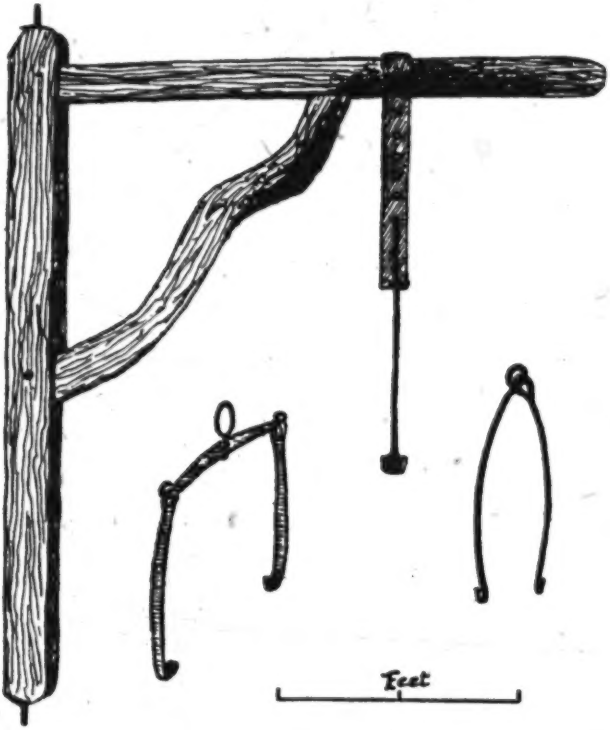

FIG. 20. Bog-oak crane and adjustable pot-hanger, Co. Armagh, with fittings for hanging griddle and pots.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

243 [301] grasses and flax. The many practical uses of straw will be described in a later chapter and its employment in fashioning various kinds of dolls, ceremonial dresses and masks, for example on St. Briget's Day. Certain protective charms were also made of oat-straw, for example the Bratóg Brighde (St. Briget's rag or mantle) worn by the fishermen of Tory Island as a protection against storms. Here the explanation may lie in the power of wind over bits of loose straw which by association gives the straw the secret of controlling the wind. This is the basis of the phrase used in Co. Cavan to describe something which circulates quickly: 'going round like the straws'. It was the custom to ward off storms by running with a handful of straws from one farm to another.

789 243 [195] [821]

With corn, as with hay and turf, the harvesting proceeds by building up stooks and ricks of increasing size according to the nature of the crop and the weather conditions. Little stooks (footings) of four or six sheaves are the first stage in the construction of the twelve-sheaf stooks (ten standing and two inverted hooding sheaves) which, however, are generally confined to wheat (Fig. 51). It is the general practice to build the little stooks of corn, after one or two weeks' seasoning, into hand-stacks which are of a convenient size to make a load for the rick-shifter, or for the tractor-lifter which is replacing it. The shapes of these miniature stacks, varying from one district to another, are often extremely picturesque, and their serried rows marching up the hillsides give the autumn fields a populated appearance. Their many names (hut, shig, bart, adag, and so on) would indicate that they are no novelty, and these little field stacks are as characteristic of Wales and Scotland as they are of Ireland (Fig. 52). A picturesque variety of hay-stack, commonly seen in Connacht, is the sheep-cock, built around a tall pole which prevents the cock from collapsing when eaten away at the base.

243

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

and houses. There is a marked loosening of inhibitions at this time. The occasion is something of a festival, of picnic meals and keen appetites, so that tea is said to taste better at turf-cutting than at any other time. After the March winds and the lengthening days of spring have dried the bog surface there is a stirring in the homesteads, the well-worn tools are pulled out of their hiding-places and the smith is kept busy repairing spades and barrows. Bright new tools litter the town pavements on fair day, and the countryman chooses his new slane with an exhibition of caution that seems superfluous until one remembers that an ounce of weight or an inch of length can make the difference between smooth ease and back-break. April, everywhere the driest month of the year, is the best month for cutting: an early start gives the turves a better chance of drying, but the planting of crops keeps the men busy till the end of the month, so that May is the likeliest time to see them in the bogs. There is an old belief that to facilitate drying, peat should be cut when the moon is waning (Pl. 9, 1).

A whiff of turf smoke drifting from a hidden fire where the tea is brewed is the first sign that the bog is peopled. If it is a deep bog you will look in vain for signs of activity, but once you have been seen dozens of heads pop up from deep cuttings and the diggers welcome a break for a smoke and a 'crack'. Turbary rights are extremely complicated, but with the decreasing demand for turf there is little dissension even when banks are communally owned. Nowadays each family generally has its own bank or cutting-face, but it is customary for two or three families to pool their labour and work at each bank in turn. The owner of the bank by tradition provides food for the helpers. On the average a week's cutting provides sufficient fuel for each family, but the time taken and the amount required depend on the nature of the bog and on the quality of the turf. Ideally the season's cut should contain a proportion of brown top turf, that is light sphagnum peat for summer firing, and a proportion of black bottom peat for winter use: this is moist humified peat which dries hard as a brick and burns almost like coal. The amount required is measured by the load, that is the load of a small one-horse cart. I was told in Donegal that a good team of four men, cutting, lifting, wheeling and spreading,

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

formerly allotted to tenants in proportion to the acreages of their farm holdings. The weed had to be carried away among the slippery boulders in back-creels and hand-barrows and stacked on the beach ready for the carts and creel-asses. The driftweed cast up by the storms of winter was more accessible but its division gave rise to endless disputes and was often regulated by careful procedure and the casting of lots, though some beaches were subdivided by standing stones. In Donegal I was told how at low tide, by the light of lanterns, men would dash into the sea up to their necks to drag out the floating weed. It is an interesting example of manorial privilege that on one beach, below the Norman castle at Greencastle, County Down, all the wrack blown in after 17th March goes to the farm which occupies the ruined castle. Every little bay where the weed collects has its wrack road leading down (Fig. 4), and fields near the shore may have a seaweed gate giving direct access. From Christmas onwards a careful watch was kept on the weather, and a spirit of excitement spread inland from the shore as the wind rose. Every bay has its own particular wind, blowing from 'the right art', for a good yield of wrack. (For kelp, however, an offshore wind was needed, because it is the returning undertow which brings the deeper weeds ashore). There are many accounts of the extraordinary zeal of the wrack gatherers and their feats of endurance. Even English visitors were forced to admit that 'it would be impossible to witness a scene of greater industry than was being enacted by these lazy Irish'.[1]

As on other occasions when men left their lonely farms and gathered together there was much merry-making and noisy recollection of past wrack harvests. One cannot doubt that the harvest of the fields, its 'luck' as well as its bounty, was felt to depend on success in this first step in the farming year. The desire to be first and the intense rivalry were prompted by motives stronger than the wish for material gain. In Scotland one reads of the great anxiety that was shown to secure the first load of wrack on New Year's Day, and on that day a portion of seaweed was laid at the doors of the farmstead and in each of the fields.[2] In Jersey the *vraic* (wrack) harvest is

[1] J. H. Tuke, *A Visit to Donegal and Connaught*, 54.
[2] M. Banks, *British Calendar Customs: Scotland*, 2, 97.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

and purchasing boards, it is still a powerful commercial and social force in the rest of Ireland. In fact the numbers of fairs have increased with the post-famine dominance of the cattle trade, though they have tended to be concentrated in fewer centres as many small fair-towns have been by-passed by improved means of communication. On the other hand the weekly markets have declined or disappeared, their place taken by shops which typically handle drinks as well as groceries, clothing as well as hardware. Thus the fair has retained and even strengthened its magnetic hold on the countryfolk, and though many of its subsidiary functions have been taken over by institutions of more recent origin, the fair itself retains a pagan aura. There is a widespread belief, by no means confined to Ireland, that fair days are always rainy days. This belief may well be justified by climatic averages, but I have heard it explained as a consequence of the lies and profanity, the fights and pagan ways of the fair. Many an ancient fair has become extinct, no doubt because it no longer fulfilled its economic functions, but the explanation usually given is that it was abandoned 'on account of the fighting'.

In Europe, north of the Alpine mountains, the fair as a means of exchange and social intercourse is an institution older than the town, and older far than Christianity. The periodic assemblies of early Celtic Ireland served as temporary towns, and it was probably these sites which Ptolemy marked as cities on his map of the second century A.D. They were held on hill-tops hallowed by an antiquity which archaeology has in some instances traced back to the Bronze Age, and the regions which they served were, we have suggested, already taking shape in the late Neolithic period. Ireland has a number of large enclosures of Neolithic date analogous to Windmill Hill in Wiltshire, which apparently functioned as seasonal meeting places where stock was rounded-up and sorted. An enclosure of rather different type but of similar age—the Giant's Ring near Belfast—was the scene of horse-racing down to recent centuries. On the cairn-crowned Cave Hill, too, overlooking Belfast, crowds used to assemble on Easter Monday 'in accordance with immemorial usage'.[1] We may see in the 'parles

[1] J. B. Doyle, *Tours in Ulster* (1855), 102.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

526 perfect sphere the rounded igneous pebbles which are selected for the purpose. One wonders whether some of the many cup-marked stones which turn up in the fields in certain districts—I have seen many in Inishowen in Donegal—were used for shaping stones, such as the sling-stones with which champion slingers, of whom the legendary Cuchulainn was one, performed [411] their feats. The sling and the sling-rod were originally hunting weapons and probably instruments of war, and one of the last refuges of slinging as a pastime was the now vanished Claddagh, the fishing suburb of Galway, where a man was not reckoned a good shot until he could strike a shilling as far away as it could be seen.[1]

312 Where a holy well has dried up—the usual explanation is that it was desecrated and moved its position—the sanctity of the 824 site may be transferred to a tree. The so-called pin-well at 778 Arboe in Co. Tyrone is a beech tree, hirsute with pins and nails, growing in the burying ground on a Celtic monastic site. A rag-well at Clonmel is visited by mountain farmers who hang rag offerings on briars at lambing and calving times, and afterwards place more rags appropriate in number to the increase obtained.[2] There is on the island of Inishmurray a wind-● [821] well which has the power of controlling the wind, the ritual being to empty the well to produce a calm. Sticks and stones also 789 figure in wind-raising ceremonies, and 'the rude stone image of 778 Inniskea' (Inishkea in Co. Mayo), which was dressed up in flannel each New Year's Day, had powers of producing either storm or calm.[3] Powerful magic was worked by a wooden statue of St. Macdara, formerly kept in his chapel—an oratory of early type with projecting *antae*—on an island dedicated to the saint in the extreme south-western corner of Co. Galway. Sailors passing the island dipped their sails three times in honour of the image, but we are left to guess what superstitions were involved from the statement that about the year 1640 'the bishop of Tuam caused it to be buried for weighty reasons'.[4]

[1] *U.J.A.*, 2 (1854), 164.
[2] *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), 284.
[3] C. Otway, *Erris and Tyrawly*, 107.
[4] C. R. Browne, *Carna and Mweenish*.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

776 Croaghan, and Celts such as Lachtna (A.D. 820-840), and Brian
538 Boru (A.D. 980-1014). In one notable instance, King Conor (A.D. 1242-69) is the reputed builder of the great stone fort of Dun Conor in Aran, which in the eleventh-century legend is evidently connected with Conchiurn or Conchraed the Firbolg,—a relation accepted in 1685 by Roderic O'Flaherty, although he called its hero "Conquevar" (*i.e.* Chonchobhar or Conor). Any modern allusion to the Danann is therefore "suspect." Many visits to the recesses
776 of the hills in Burren from 1878 onwards,—and I may add that
788 the same is true of the rest of Clare,—only gave me, in 1905, one
823 direct reference to the Danann.[46] At the natural moat crowned by the small stone ring wall of Croaghateeaun, near Lisdoonvarna, we were told to cross ourselves as a protection against the Danann. The place was, nevertheless, undoubtedly regarded by the older people living near it as a most dangerous fairy fort, and we were told how certain badger hunters,—(who brought drink with them), —after a long festival on its summit got benighted there; they eventually returned home sobered by fright, as they suddenly "saw the whole fleet" of "them" coming up the mound, and escaped only just in time.

776 The "whirlwinds" along dusty roads and sudden gusts were
788 not long ago everywhere supposed to be caused by the progress of
● 821 fairy beings. The older folk believed, and trembled,—crossing themselves, or saying a word of prayer,—while the younger folk, more than half in jest, raised their hats, as is still sometimes done to the unlucky "single magpie" and the weasel.

776 I know of two cases of reputed changelings. My second sister, whose delicacy, when an infant, excited remark, was, about 1842, taken out by a servant to be exposed on a shovel on the doorstep at Carnelly. The angry and hasty intervention of another servant saved the child, but the would-be "exposer" was convinced of the propriety of her attempt "to get back the real child" from the fairies. A very old woman, Kate (Geerin) Molony, a henwife at Maryfort, near Tulla, whom I faintly remember in 1869, was many years before anxious about her little daughter's failing health, and went to a "wise woman," who assured her that the child was "changed." She spoke of this on her return, and unfortunately

[46] Apart from Lon, at Slievnaglasha, and the "hags."

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

000 birds, the whisper and rustle of the wind on the grass and heather, and those weird sounds, booming and sobbing out of nowhere, which are supposed to arise from underground streams and caverns.

V. *Will-o-the-wisps and Corpse-lights.*

103 821 The will-o-the-wisp, if not unknown, is at least extremely rare. The name Loughaunaguinnell, or Loughaguinnell, of a pool in Doora refers, I was told, to a "candle" floating over its surface. In the name Doora itself we find the ancient word for water, which occurs as the river Dour in Kerry in Ptolemy's Atlas in the first century. Mr. and Mrs. Hall, in *Ireland: its Scenery, Character, etc.* (1841), note that one of their guides told them of "corpse candles" seen on the banks of the Shannon, and voices of the "good people" heard with them. Crofton Croker, in "Florry Cantillon's Funeral,"[2] alludes to the "Blue Man's Lake at midnight," a lonely place in the bog at Shragh, near Kilrush, where "a spectral figure enveloped in a bluish flame" haunted the melancholy waters. Some of the "corpse lights" shining in graveyards, "forts," and deserted buildings I have myself seen. In one case, I traced the light to the stagnant water, full of rotten leaves, in the fosse of a "fort," which, when stirred by waving branches, gave out phosphorescent light. In another case a church gable was observed for many nights lit up with blue flame, after three victims of a railway accident had been laid in their family vault below it. The windows of Inchiquin Castle are seen across the lake, lit up by pale blue fire, which vanishes from the sight of anyone approaching the ruined building though still visible at a distance. A deserted cottage on a ridge not far from Tulla, as I have seen, used to be lit up with pale light, and was reputed haunted. Several graveyards have displayed "corpse lights," and particularly those at Killone Convent (a picturesque twelfth-century ruin on a wooded slope over a beautiful lake near Ennis), and, I hear, Killeemur and Kilmaleery on the Shannon and Fergus, and Clooney in Bunratty Barony.

[2] *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*, Part II. (1828), p. 24.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

773 Another sunken island off Loop Head is named by the Rev. John Graham and the Halls,[38] and called Kilstiffin or Kilstapheen. I heard no such tradition in Moyarta, but O'Curry alludes to it without contradiction, although he was a native and son of a veritable repertory of the local legends of the Irrus.[39] The towers and other edifices were visible at times under the waves, and its [821] inhabitants sometimes raised destructive storms over its site when all around was calm.

The large lake of Cullaun (Cullaunyheeda) near Tulla is reputed to cover a palace or a city. Tradition said that a chief, Sioda MacNamara, (probably the restorer of the beautiful [776] "Abbey" of Quin in 1402), was carried into the depths by a "water horse" which he had caught and trained. The rock off which his treacherous steed leaped was shown before 1870, and the chief was believed to be sleeping till "the last weird battle in the west," doomed to win Ireland her liberty and a glorious place amongst the nations. It seems likely that it was from the same lake that magic cattle issued, as I heard about Kilkishen, near it, in 1877. A local bard, Michael Hogan, refers to the lake in one of his poems,[40] but how far he embodies local legend I am unable to say. His light-hearted, if lawless, hero is surprised on coming to "Cullaun's fairy waters" to see a noble park instead of a lake. He hits his cow in surprise, and she leaps the fence. Following her he reaches the palace of an ancient chief, who entertains him and dismisses him with his marvellously fattened cow. He finds at the fair that he has been absent for a year under the waters of the lake.

"Thro' wild Cullane's embowering shades—
Beneath the silver starlight, sleeping,
He pass'd—the trees, with silent heads,
Upon his darken'd path hung weeping.

---

following other romances, and contradicting the genuine legends in several particulars.

[38] *Mason's Parochial Survey*, vol. ii., p. 490, collected by Rev. J. Graham from the Behanes, Landers, Contis, and Coonerties of Kilrush and Carrigaholt; Mr. and Mrs. S. Hall, *Ireland: Its Scenery etc.*, vol. ii., p. 436.

[39] *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol. ii.

[40] *Lays and Legends of Thomond*, pp. 13, 20.

[P 222]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Climate

821 Whether or not the steamer calls at Inis Beag, especially during the winter months when severe storms are frequent, is of considerable psychological significance. The importance of weather conditions as they impinge, both directly and [182] indirectly, on this tiny island far out in the ocean cannot be overemphasized. Most [521] activities, and not only farming and fishing, are more or less affected by the climate, and the past, present, and future states of the weather figure prominently [576] in conversations among the folk. It is customary for individuals when meeting to talk first of the weather before turning to other matters, and some of the common greetings pertain to immediate conditions: "It is raining.", "It is windy.", or "It is a beautiful day." These are usually the phrases first mastered by non-Gaelic speakers who spend time in Inis Beag, along with the most used greeting—"God bless you." and its reply, "God and Mary bless you."

132 The year around climate of Inis Beag might be labeled cool, humid, rainy, [127] and windy, at least by one living in the Great Lakes region of the United States. A perusal of lighthouse records for the decade 1951 to 1960 revealed a mean temperature of 42 degrees (all figures Fahrenheit) for the winter months, December to March, and 59 degrees for the summer ones, June to September. During that decade, the lowest and highest temperatures recorded in Inis Beag, both during 1955, were 28 and 80 degrees respectively. January was the coldest month, with a mean temperature of 39 degrees, and July was the warmest, with 61 degrees. The island is located in a climatic zone in which the average rainfall is 40 to 50 inches per year; the average number of rain days per year is 225, and the average June sun hours per day is five and a half.

> Westerly winds predominate in Ireland, though naturally a climate experiencing the passage of so many depressions has winds from every quarter at some time during the year . . . Winds of gale force are most frequent in the northwest, where they average 40 per year . . . Most of the gales are from a westerly direction: they are so severe a menace to shipping that many inhabitants of [137] islands and remote coastal districts . . . profit from periodic salvage hauls . . . The absence of trees on the exposed western coasts of Ireland is usually regarded as a direct result of the exposure to westerly winds . . . (Freeman 1960:50–51).

Snow usually falls several times during the winter, but it melts within hours as the temperature seldom fails to climb above freezing on any day. During the months from June to August, the sea and air are often warm enough to encourage 821 "comfortable" swimming by tourists, usually off the strand. The islanders consider May the ideal month so far as climate is concerned, for the weather tends to be cool, dry, and windy; flowers grow in profusion and birds return in great numbers. March weather, which is much colder but also dry and windy, is called "hard."

All of the adults of Inis Beag are amateur weather forecasters; however, [815] several old men are considered to be specialists in the art. Some households possess [207] barometers, and forecasts on the radio are listened to attentively by those who own sets. But, in the main, the folk prefer to make their own prognostications based on traditional signs, most of which are sound meteorologically and the outgrowth of

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

centuries of careful observations. I collected 250 of these signs and placed them in the following general categories: density, location, and time of mist; type of frost and heaviness of dew; size and position of rings around sun and moon; color and conformation of sky and clouds at particular times of the day; density and location of fog banks; position and time of rainbows; clarity, closeness, and color of Inis Thiar and the mainland; changes in the weather in relation to tides; actions of animals; and pains in the human body. Of special interest are the signs associated with animal behavior, such as the height at which swallows fly, the prevalence of fly hordes, the crowing of roosters and braying of asses, the position that cats assume at the hearth, and whether or not spiders weave their webs across trails. The expert forecaster will weigh together as many as ten signs before announcing his prediction, and I once collected 16 from an old man in Low Village assessing conditions 12 hours hence. Some signs are quite obviously undependable, among them the quacking of ducks which some say will "call" rain, and the scratching of floors and furniture by cats which, according to others, will point the direction of the wind following a shift in the near future. The folk believe that the moon and tides exert a profound influence on both weather and human behavior; my wife on one occasion was told that her "snappish" mood (the words of a neighbor, not mine) was caused by the new moon.

The climate, in part, determines the conception of seasons held by the islanders. Four seasons are recognized, but their duration deviates from the norm of Western culture. Winter is conceived as embracing only December and January, while spring is thought to commence in February and end in early April. The other two seasons are not so well defined, but most folk agree that summer takes up the greater part of the year—from April until mid-September—and autumn the remaining three months. December and January are regarded as the coldest months, during which time there is a lull in economic activities, but planting begins early in February. Although the prevailing winds during the year are from the west and southwest, for several weeks between January and mid-March icy winds blow steadily from the southeast quarter and cause much physical discomfort and illness. In late March and early April, temperatures rise rapidly, and some islanders believe that March "steals" three days from April so that summer cannot be expected until after April 3rd. The circumstances of the theft are revealed in a legend.

The reason that summer is thought to extend for so long is a psychological one: the folk dislike winter with its cold and dampness and attendant sickness and the sense of isolation from the world that it brings. Few outsiders visit Inis Beag during the winter, and often the steamer is unable to leave port or must turn back because of gales or high seas. It is not out of the ordinary for the island to be totally isolated for a week or ten days because of inclement conditions. From late January on, warm weather is anticipated eagerly, and I was told time and again that summer was imminent when spells of cold and rainy weather occurred between March and June of 1960. During a quarrel with her husband over his confident weather forecasting ability, a woman noted for being an outspoken realist declared, "Inis Beag has only one summer month—July."

The island experiences but eight hours of daylight, from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon, at the time of the winter solstice, and

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

many of them have lost their lives to the ocean. Islanders are well aware of the wide differences in rowing and fishing abilities among themselves, and the evaluation of the skills of various men, past and present, is a much heard subject of conversation. Also, many men choose not to fish because they are unable to develop the requisite talents, are prone to severe seasickness, or are overly wary of the dangers associated with fishing. It seems reasonable to assume that people who spend so much time on the water as a matter of safety will have learned to swim, but I was unable to discover a single islander who possesses this skill. The reasons put forward to account for the fact are several, but the most significant one never is broached—the puritanical reluctance to bare the body either publicly or privately at any age. Folk rationalizations are best summed up in the following quotations: "Nothing will happen to the man who knows the sea.", "Better for a man to drown at once and save himself the suffering.", "The man who can't swim will take more care.", and "When death is on a man, he can't be saved."

A recurring motif in writings about Inis Beag is the threatening sea and heavy loss of life among fishermen, with its attendant psychological depression. In the past century, only four sea accidents have occurred in the island with the loss of but 12 lives. The folk are extremely cautious out of respect for the elements, handle their canoes with remarkable dexterity, and are excellent weather forecasters. The claim of one famous writer that each family has lost male members to the ocean reflects not only his psychological outlook, but the breadth and depth of kinship reckoning and the high degree of inbreeding—as an islander told me, "Every Inis Beag family is related, and the drowned man might have been eight-of-kin (third cousin) who died 60 years ago." The motif can be attributed to the projection of a tragic world view into the interpretation of the local culture by some authors, to the nativistic and primitivistic biases of other writers, and to a common sense conclusion reached by observers who have spent little time in the island and have failed to "count noses."

Diet

The diet of the islanders is simple, and only one large meal is eaten during the day. After the turf fire is rekindled from coals and water is boiled for tea, the family assembles for a breakfast which includes bread spread with butter and jam and tea mixed with ample amounts of milk and sugar. Dinner at noon and lunches in the late afternoon and before retiring at night feature the same ingredients, although a boiled or fried egg usually is added to the dinner menu. The supper, eaten between seven and eight o'clock in the summer and an hour or two earlier during the winter, is the main meal when the family once again is united, and at this time boiled potatoes and vegetables, and meat if available, dominate the menu. Again bread and tea are served, and a dessert, or "sweet"—such as custard, rhubarb, blancmange, or biscuits—may be added. Children of school age in a family eat together at noon and after school and may be joined by their father, but his duties often absent him from one or both of these meals, and he may carry bread and tea

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes nowhere after the heart stops beating."

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people," or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid, pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons, rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously misplaced by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live in *clochán* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing, fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper "God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish